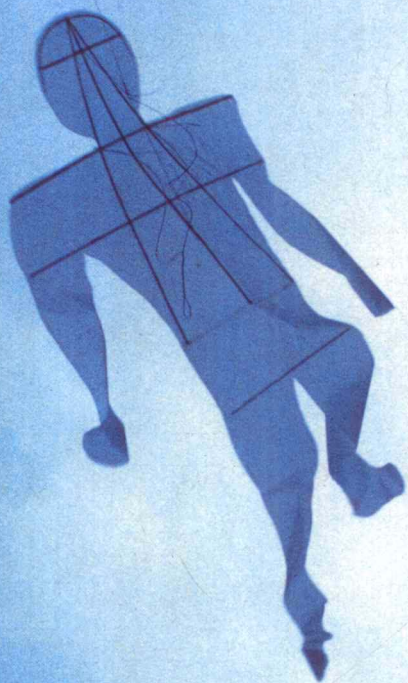


失重 张念的艺术文本 **Zhang Nian's Art**

Gravity Lost

Concerning Art in the Transforming Period of China



失重

Gravity Lost

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张念的艺术文本

Zhang Nian's Art

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Gravity Lost

——**Zhang Nian's Art**

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张 念 **Zhang Nian**



序 言

王 林

我和张念似乎很有缘分。

1989年现代艺术大展，我最感兴趣的作品之一是《孵蛋》，尤其是艺术家挂在胸前的那句话：“孵蛋期间，拒绝理论，以免打扰下一代。”当时我正在批判新潮美术中的理性主义及其农民革命式的权重倾向。过了几年以后才知道，张念生在四川，曾就读美院附中，和我乃是同乡和同校。

后来不时看到他的作品，印象很深的是“蛋系列”。大概张念当年孵蛋时，还以为下一代不再是“八五时期”的闹山麻雀，而是大鹏、金雕、凤凰之类更有名堂的东西。殊不知，新生代、玩世、艳俗，一代比一代更猥琐、更无聊、更利欲熏心、更随波逐流。张念生活在否定价值或以无价值为价值的同龄人中，以其孵蛋的期待，自然会产生苦闷和愤慨。他的行为《辄蛋》，掷蛋于墙，让生命的理想裂碎飞溅，显然是失望之举，不过是失望之中仍然保持着对于责任的追问。接下来的《摊蛋》，感觉张念在精神上又回到了现实。既然催生无望，英雄远去，何不认真审视眼前这个真实具体的消费社会和社会消费。摊开的蛋圆润晶莹、浓稠黏糊、美观诱人，甚至不无色情。这样有意放大的形象和对于欲望的夸张与挑衅，蕴涵着张念作品一贯具有的批判意识。正是这种意识使他在所谓60年代艺术家中独树一帜，也正是这种意识促使他越出美术界关心的更为广泛的社会问题和文化问题。如城市建设、历史记忆、文物保护，农民工生活以及非典疫情背后的权利关系。

张念不是那种急功近利的艺术家。他对生活所作的安排也用不着为艺术“作稻粱谋。”在北京他也算是一位颇有名气的设计家。我主编《世界当代艺术状态丛书》时，出版社就是请他做的封面和书装，而其中的《现成物品与艺术》一书就是由他编著的。张念有设计的事情做，有编书的事情做，艺术创作，和我做批评一样，乃是“业余”。因为业余，比起很多艺术家更自由。这对他来说是件好事，对中国美术界来说也是一件好事。因为中国从来不缺少艺术家，缺少的只是自由而具有批判精神的艺术家。写到这里，突然想起苏轼在《记承天寺夜游》一文中说过的话：“何夜无月，何处无竹柏，但少闲人如吾二人耳。”是为序。

2004年7月15日
于四川美院桃花山

Forward

Wang Lin

Life has its own will in making twists and turns. Unexpected to the both of us Zhang Nian and I have crossed paths again and again in our lives. This is what the Chinese call yuan fen, a concept close to fate and destiny.

In 1989 China Avant-garde Exhibition took place in Beijing. One of my favorite works from the exhibition was Hatching. I was particularly interested in the paper plaque hanging in front of the artist's chest, on which the artist declared, "To avoid disturbing the next generation, no debate during hatching." At the time I was criticizing the rationalism in the Avant-garde art and the power struggle in the art world that resembled the peasant revolution. Years later I found out that Zhang Nian was born in Si Chuan and went to the preparatory school of Si Chuan Academy of Art, thus we were not only from the same place but also the same school.

From then on I have continually seen Zhang Nian's work. I am most impressed with his Egg series. When Zhang Nian did Hatching perhaps he expected the next generation would have not been like the noisy sparrows of 1985, he was hoping to see the birth of hawks, falcons and phoenixes. To his disappointment the new generation was corrupted by the vulgarity and greed of society. Zhang Nian lived among those who deny the concept of value or take what was valueless as value, which inevitably aggravated him as he was expressing a long waited hope in Hatching. In his performance ?Hatching, Zhang Nian threw eggs at the wall to represent the brutal crush of his ideal. Although disappointed with reality, he still carried the questions of an artist's responsibility. Since the heroes had long gone and there was no hope in inducing the birth of his hope, Zhang Nian turned his eye to examine the reality of a consumer

society that China had become and what was devoured by the society. Next came Sunny Side Up. The photos showed eggs laid in perfect sunny-side-up form on the street, shining yellow yoke surrounded by the lucid egg white, its luring beauty even suggested a tint of eroticism. Zhang Nian used the exaggerated image to challenge a society that gave in to sensual desire. This is what made Zhang Nian stand out among artists born in the sixties. His work always has an element of social critique. Driven by social consciousness Zhang Nian is able to walk out of pure art for his concerns on social and cultural issues such as urban development, history and art preservation, peasants' life and even the damage caused by SARS.

Zhang Nian is not an artist who lives for money and fame. His livelihood does not depend on his art. He is a successful illustrator and book designer. Now to think of it, he did the design for the series of The State of World Contemporary Art that I published and wrote The Readymade and Art. Design is Zhang Nian's profession, as for art, just like me writing critique, is an amateur activity. Being an amateur he has more freedom than others. This is good for him and good for the Chinese art community. China does not lack artists; she lacks artists who have critical mind and who are free from other aspects of life so that they are able to use their mind to the utmost extend. At this point I suddenly remembered a line from a poem by Su Dong Po, "the moon shines every night; bamboo and pine grow everywhere; but there aren't many who have the free time in hand like you and me."

Such is my introduction to Zhang Nian's book *Gravity Lost*

Mt. Peach Flower
Si Chuan Academy of Art
July 15, 2004





张 念 (张念潮)

1964 年生于四川绵阳, 1984 年毕业于中央工艺美院 (现清华大学艺术学院), 1988-90 年任教于汕头大学工艺美术学院, 1990 年至今自由职业。人在北京, 从事艺术。形式不拘一格, 涉及架上、行为、观念、装置、摄影 (胶片和 DV) 和设计等。1986 年在北京音乐厅举办个展, 先后参加《中国现代艺术展》(1989, 北京)、《现代中国艺术交流展》(1990, 德国)、《ADC 视觉艺术展》(1998, 纽约)、《对话: 中国艺术展》(2002, 意大利)、《罗马摄影双年展》(2003 年, 罗马)、《蓝天不设防》(2003 年 5 月)、《水·万分之三 / Water 0.03%》等国内外展览。著作有《中国新锐艺术——23 位前卫艺术家作品实录》(世界语出版社 1999 年 7 月版)、《现成物象与艺术》(湖南美术出版社 2003 年 12 月版)。

Zhang Nian (Zhang Nianchao)

was born in Mian Yang, Si Chuan in 1964. In 1988 he graduated from the former Central Academy of Arts and Design, now the School of Art of Qing Hua University. From 1988 to 1990 he taught photography in the School of Art of Shan Tao University. From 1990 he has worked as a free-lance artist. Zhang Nian lives and works in Beijing. His works were done in a variety of art forms including canvas, conceptual art, performance art, installation, photography, digital video, and design. He had his first solo show in 1986 in Beijing Concert Hall. In 1989 he participated in the Grand Exhibition of Contemporary Art of China. His works have been chosen to participate in the exhibition of Exchange: Chinese Contemporary Art, Germany, 1990; ADC Visual Art Exhibition, New York, 1998; Dialogue: Chinese Art Exhibition, Italy, 2002; Rome Biennale of Photography, Rome, 2003; The Sky Has No Defense, 2003; Water: 0.03%; and Together, hosted by UNICEF, 2003. Zhang Nian has published a number of books including China New Art: the Works of 23 Avant-Garde Artists (World Language Publishing: 1999) and Art and Existing Objects (Hu Nan Fine Arts Publishing: 2003)

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民工 2003 雕塑
Rural Worker 2003 Sculpture

失重

张念

想起一个故事：“一次一只青蛙不小心掉进滚烫的水中，它毫不犹豫的从烫水里跳了出来。第二次它掉进了刚开始烧水的锅里，因水在慢慢的加热，一时间，它感到很舒服，等到它觉得不对劲时，也就在慢慢的加热过程中舒服过去了。”从什么时候开始我们的艺术是为了“舒服”而存在？从什么时候开始艺术作品从艺术家表达对世界的认识的创作活动，演变成一笔笔商业交易？从什么时候开始艺术摆脱了“思想”，占有物质变化成当代艺术的方向？从什么时候开始艺术转而演变成了社会的装饰和工具？从什么时候开始艺术家成了掌握金钱和权力的工作人员，从而使文化某种的卑微得到了印证？从什么时候开始个人存在的基础只有“服从”？从什么时候开始艺术家荒谬地变成了对掌握权势的效忠？从什么时候开始艺术价值与社会价值？大众文化与少数艺术、促销活动与现代艺术成为错位和乱伦关系？这一切都是屈服的結果。

我们正处在中国历史上从未有过的一个时期：即从人治社会向法治社会转变的时期，旧的秩序还没有瓦解，新的秩序还没有建立。这样的时期必然有人得势，有人失落，我们的空气中充满了喧嚣、浮躁、痛苦、无奈。这些因素所指向的惟一目标即是——金钱。在现实与目标的夹缝中我们看到成千上万的农民，放弃了曾视为生命的土地，宁可忍受屈辱与歧视而涌进城市，但城市的道道防线又把他们确定在城市的边缘或者最底层。他们的后代将受到怎样的教育？他们有什么样的社会保障？他们怎样满足自己的欲望？他们在城市有什么样的权利，他们的青春和体力奉献给了城市，城市回报给他们的却是什么？今天，受现代化影响而离开土地的农民，在这过程之中，自然会饱尝心灵漂泊和失落之苦，难道这个代价必须要他们付出吗？他们在一个陌生之地、那个叫“城市”的地方，遇到传统道德与现代化竞争的挑战。在陈桂棣、春桃所著的《中国农民调查》中有这



车站 1995 影像
Station 1995 photograph

Gravity Lost

Zhang Nian



Once upon a time a frog jumped into a pot of boiling water by accident. In a split of a second he jumped out right away. A few days later the frog jumped into the pot by accident again. But this time the water on the stove was just starting to heat up. The frog felt nice in the warm water, when he started feeling different it was already too late. He died in the comfort of a hot bath.

Since when art started to exist for the "comfort"; since when art has changed from the expression of artist's understanding of the world to market commodity; since when art has left its intellectual pursuit and heads toward the material gain; since when art became a social decoration; since when art became the ——embodiment of power and money; since when the foundation of individual existence was built on the sole purpose of "service;" since when certain artist's absurdity became the loyalty for authority; since when the relationship between artistic value and social value, the public art and the esoteric, marketing and art, have obscenely mixed up; and all this have been the result of yielding.

We are living in an age unprecedented in Chinese history. China is changing from a country of man to a country of law, as the new orders are yet being formed and the old orders haven't completely collapsed. In such transitional period inevitably some people are taking advantages of it and some people are lost. The air is filled with noise, clamor, suffering and -compromise. Those elements added together pointing us toward one aim only, and that is money. In the crack of reality and ideal there exist millions of peasants. They abandoned their cherished land and pored into crowded cities where they are caged at the bottom of the city fortresses. What kind of education will their children receive? What kind of social security do they have? How would they fulfill their dreams and desires? What kind of rights do they have in the city? How would the city repay them for their youth and labor? The peasants who have left their earth are



样的描述：“我们看到了你想像不到的贫穷、想像不到的罪恶、想像不到的苦难、想像不到的无奈、想像不到的抗争、想像不到的沉默、和想像不到的悲壮”。

面对近二十年的变化，我不想睁着眼睛却视而不见。影像作为我的第一选择，承载了我想说出的和说不出的。我总是安慰自己：至少从镜头看出去的场景是真实的。从取景框向外，在每张看似一样的面孔背后必定有不一样的故事，在每张不一样的面孔背后必定有相同的经历。我们在接受教育时从学校那里得到的是如何行使你的义务，而不是有个性地行使你的权利，所以在看似麻木的面目下也是一张张顺民的面孔，这些依从而不能自主的良民便生活在那里——我们社会的低层。我反复翻看那些照片，看那些普通的、鲜活的、有着生命的形象，他们让我想到一面镜子，一面观察社会的镜子。在这镜子里，那些处于失重状态下不同的面孔，深深地触动着我。我常问自己：“面对这转型时期的状态是不是可以熟视无睹？是不是可以麻木不仁？是不是要利用自己的权利——艺术。”尽管并不知道我是不是拥有权利，但它存在于我的心里。



民工 1999 影像绘画
Rural Workers 2002
Oil on photograph

民工 1999 影像绘画
Rural Workers 2002
Oil on photograph



not unaffected by modern technology. They are suffering from the loss of soul. Do they must pay such a heavy price? In a strange land called city, they are facing both the challenge of traditional morality and the ruthless competition of modern society, as described in Chen Gui Li and Chun Tao's book, *A Survey on Peasants in China*, "We have witnessed unimaginable poverty, evil, suffering, silence and struggle."

I cannot pretend to be blind before the changes of the past twenty years. Video as my first choice has carried out what I want yet hard to say. I try to console myself that at least the scenes in the camera lens tell the truth. Behind similar faces there must be different stories and behind different faces similar stories. They are like the twisted faces in the mirror, through which we view the society. And I am deeply moved by these twisted faces. I often ask myself, before all this, should I neglect, be indifferent, or should I use my art right to deal with it? I am not sure whether I am endowed with such rights, but they do exist in my heart.

According to Bo Wei, "When the condition becomes unsuitable to the existence of a society or a people, the spiritual light will disappear." This is another reason that makes me feel the loss of gravity. We grew up as the progeny of communism, and yet the communist belief was crashed by the market economy before our eyes. We lived through the time when the ideal society of "to each according to his needs and from each according to his ability" walked into its own grave. We were baptized in the Cultural Revolution. Our education was cut off from the connection with our inherited culture. We are like the undernourished orphan left out there on our own.

Living with the societal belief that time is money, spirituality becomes irrelevant. Under the maneuver of such doctrine we lost our freedom in the imaginative and spiritual world. The only possibility left to artists is to observe a world that is evolving, that exists in between the real and the hypothetical, that is prosperous and yet in decline; that has both native and imported cultures, and that exists between life and death. With what language will artists distinguish the good from evil? How will artists detect the germs in the air? Will we be able to retrieve our lost language? How should the creature that is called "artist" think? And how to contemplate on the cause for the formation of absurdity and a world that is utterly different from the real and yet already buried under the hypothesis of another utopia. We are guided by unclear spirit in search of unclear art. The result is like a mute person giving off voice, using an unreal voice to sing about a real world.

"In a free country the level of people's thinking ability is unimportant, so long as they think." Says ———Montesquieu. If we still possess our faculty to think, it means we are still living in a free country. I often ask myself, what went wrong in our thinking. We are like the lost lamb that cannot find our spiritual home.



. 网 2001 装置
.Net 2001 Installation

. 网 2001 装置
.Net 2001 Installation

A friend who shared my happy times in Yuan Ming Yuan art colony lived in Europe for more than a decade. When he came back to visit I asked him about how he was enlightened by true art in Europe. "What art?" He said, "Art is not anything."

"How could he become so disillusioned? That was the whole purpose for him to move to Europe.

In the 1980s we believed that art could save the human soul. How could my friend now perceive art as valueless? Perhaps art has already come to an end in the

West. Perhaps artists have already done their jobs, from the Renaissance to the colonization of the Industrial Revolution, from the WWII to Cold War and to economic globalization, what's there left? The absolute art and artists no longer exist. The reason why art has become nothing and yet everything is like the necessity of air. Anywhere under 2,000 meters above sea level air is unnoticed, but on top of Mt. Everest air is treasure. From this I realized that the value of art only exists where art is needed, and artists are mere oxygen suppliers. On the other hand if the air is super abundant art might find a reason to be ordinary. It might concentrate on market profit. When art evaporates in the air, naturally it becomes nothing. That's why it is laughable today to discuss whether performance art is art, for art is already not anything.

There is such contradiction in our society. Although we talk about national pride, our action indicates otherwise. There are two standards in assessing art; one is national, and the other international. We forgot one basic question, which is, what an art language is in this new age; in other words, it is to say what can be defined as artistic. What does my art express? I did not know before I start working, but I must think of

